

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: CPAS, PP

SUBJ: ADVISORY OPINION: AMERICAN CITIZEN MISSIONARIES RESIDING
IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

1. THE PNG CONSTITUTION SECTION ON CITIZENSHIP PROVIDES THAT FOREIGNERS RESIDING IN PNG FOR AT LEAST EIGHT YEARS PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE HAVE THE RIGHT TO APPLY FOR PNG CITIZENSHIP, PROVIDED THAT THEY MAKE SUCH NATURALIZATION APPLICATION WITHIN TWO MONTHS AFTER INDEPENDENCE DAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1975.

2. POST HAS RECEIVED NUMEROUS INQUIRIES FROM AMERICAN MISSIONARIES WHO HAVE RESIDED IN PNG FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AND WHO EXPECT TO REMAIN HERE FOR MANY MORE. SOME MISSIONARIES FEAR THEY WILL EVENTUALLY BE ASKED TO DEPART PNG IF THEY DO NOT ACQUIRE PNG CITIZENSHIP. THEY WILL BE FORCED TO MAKE A DECISION BASED UPON WHAT THEY BELIEVE FUTURE PNG ATTITUDES TOWARD FOREIGN MISSIONARIES WILL BE, AS THEY MUST APPLY PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 16, 1975.

3. WE BELIEVE MOST U.S. CITIZEN MISSIONARIES PLANNING TO ACQUIRE PNG CITIZENSHIP VOLUNTARILY WILL DO SO IN ORDER TO PURSUE THEIR RELIGIOUS VOCATION, NOT BECAUSE THEY WANT TO ABANDON THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. THERE IS NO CLEAR PNG POLICY ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT FOREIGN MISSIONARIES WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PURSUE THEIR TEACHING VOCATIONS HERE, BUT RECENT STATEMENTS BY THE PNG MINISTER OF EDUCATION TAUREKA HAVE CAUSED CONSIDERABLE APPREHENSION. TAUREKA STATED THAT MISSION TEACHERS MUST STAND ASIDE TO MAKE WAY FOR THE PROMOTION

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OF PNG CITIZENS.

4. DESPITE A CONTINUING ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES, MANY MISSIONARIES MAY CHOOSE TO ACQUIRE PNG CITIZENSHIP WITHIN THE TWO MONTH PERIOD FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE, AND WOULD PROBABLY BE REQUIRED TO TAKE AN OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO PNG.

5. MANY HAVE RESIDED HERE FOR DECADES AND WILL NOT REALIZE THE POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF ASSUMING PNG CITIZENSHIP. WE WANT TO MAKE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE KNOWN TO THEM IN ORDER TO PREVENT FUTURE PROBLEMS. WE HOPE THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL BE AS FORTHCOMING AS POSSIBLE IN ADVISING US WHAT TO TELL THEM. IN VIEW OF THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT WE WOULD ANTICIPATE CONSIDERABLE CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST.

6. WHILE THE POST RECOGNIZES THAT IN EACH INSTANCE WE WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE BACKGROUND REGARDING THE SURROUNDING FACTS, CIRCUMSTANCES, MOTIVES AND PURPOSES WHICH LEAD AN AMERICAN CITIZEN MISSIONARY TO TAKE PNG CITIZENSHIP, WE WOULD APPRECIATE AN ADVISORY OPINION AS TO WHETHER (1) THE ACQUISITION OF PNG CITIZENSHIP UNDER THE ABOVE CIRCUMSTANCES WILL RESULT IN LOSS OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP, AND (2) THE PROCEDURES WHICH WOULD BE INVOLVED TO LATER REGAIN U.S. CITIZENSHIP.

7. UPON RECEIPT ADVISORY OPINION WE WOULD PLAN NOTIFY MISSIONARIES THE SUBSTANCE DEPT'S VIEWS VIA LOCAL DAILY PRESS WHICH HAS WIDESPREAD COVERAGE IN PNG AND/OR MISSION NEWSLETTER.
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